

WONDER OF GOD'S PLAN
(SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2014)

Scripture Reading: Gen. 10; Acts 17:16-34

INTRODUCTION

There is an incredible lack of knowledge in our country concerning geography and world cultures.

A survey was taken a few years ago to see what 18-24 year old Americans knew about the world. Not much.

75% could not locate Israel on a map

60% could not find Iraq

50% could not find Mississippi

About 1/3 could not find Louisiana

20% thought Sudan was in Asia

Less than 30% thought it was important to know geography and similar matters.¹

These are our current and future leaders!

Many laugh at God's Word and think it is primitive or simplistic.

But consider a chapter like Gen. 10, which demands a fairly high level of knowledge of culture, language, and geography to appreciate and understand.

Who is uneducated and unsophisticated?

Dr. William Albright, the leading archaeologist of his day and not a believer, said this about Genesis 10.

It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks... The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document.²

What a gift God has given to us in this chapter!

What is the purpose of this chapter?

¹ <http://historymike.blogspot.com/2006/05/study-finds-young-americans-ignorant.html>

² Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 245.

It is the record of God fulfilling His plan of redemption first promised in Genesis 3:15. It also is connected to the curses and blessings found in Genesis 9:24-27.

Acts 17:26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

This chapter testifies to the relevance of all history.

We see God's plan to use the line of Shem and even more specifically Abram and the nation of Israel to bring forth the Messiah.

All of history is part of God's plan.

And now that our Messiah has come we ask, how can we bring the gospel to the 7.13 billion people alive today who live in 206 different nations of the world?

The nations belong to our Lord and Savior!

Let us rejoice in the wonder and complexity of God's plan even as we continue to pray for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We will look at Genesis 10 in 5 parts:

10:1 – End of the account written by Shem, Ham, and Japheth

10:2-5 – Japheth and sons

10:6-20 – Ham and sons

10:21-31 – Shem and Sons

10:32 – Conclusion

1) END OF THE ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY SHEM, HAM, AND JAPHETH, v 1.

Gen. 10:1 Now this *is* the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.

Many people think verse 1 is the introduction to this chapter.

As we have noted before, it is best to see this verse as the end of the previous section.

Verse 1 is the end of the account written by Shem, Ham, and Japheth – Genesis 6:9 – 9:29.

There are 9 major sections in Genesis that are noted by the word *genealogy* or history.

P. J. Wiseman in his book, *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis* writes:

1) In no instance is an event recorded which the person or persons named could not have written from his own intimate knowledge, or have obtained absolutely reliable information.

2) It is most significant that the history recorded in the sections outlined above, ceases in all instances before the death of the person named, yet in most case it is continued almost up to the date of death or the date on which it is stated that the tablets were written.³

He notes earlier that the word *toledot* which is translated as genealogy has the idea of history, especially family history.⁴

So who wrote the history found in Genesis 10?

The answer is found in Genesis 11:10a.

Gen. 11:10 This *is* the genealogy of Shem:

Consider the larger flow of time based on Genesis 5 and 11.

Noah's birth – 1056 after creation

Flood – 1656 years after creation

Flood ends approximately 1657 years after creation.

Abram's birth – 2008 years after creation.

His call was given at the age of 75 (Genesis 12:3)

So from the end of the flood to Abram's call – 426 years.

It is this time span that is partly covered in Genesis 10 and 11.

And consider this – Shem lived 502 years after the flood as we see from Gen. 11:11.⁵

For about 500 years, Shem carefully traced the nations and peoples that came from his two brothers and his own family.

³ P. J. Wiseman *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis*, 69.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵ Noted by Henry Morris, 246.

What an amazing record we have been given.

2) JAPHETH AND SONS, VV. 2-5

There is an order to this chapter.

Japheth and Ham are presented first, because they both were not part of the chosen line in Shem.

Genesis 4 presents the line of Cain before Genesis 5 presents the line of Seth.

Japheth and his line represent nations furthest from Israel geographically.

This doesn't mean lack of interaction or of lesser importance.

It is significant that including Japheth, Ham, and Shem, there are 70 names not including the cities built by Nimrod.

Seventy in the Bible represents totality. That is very appropriate given what this chapter records.

Many details could be considered from this chapter, but let me focus mainly on the 16 grandsons of Noah beginning with the seven sons of Japheth.

I should mention that there are questions as to some of the details.

It should also be noted that people groups do not just remain static. Large numbers of people can move from one area to another because of war, famine, disease, and opportunity.

Comments from Thomas Sowell book I was reading recently.

Gomer – Mentioned also in Ezekiel 38.

Thought to be the Cimmerians, a powerful group who came from Southern Russia and moved west over the years.

Josephus says the people called the Galatians were previously called Gomerites.

The older name for the Welsh language spoken in Wales is called Gomeraeg, a connection with Gomer.⁶

⁶ See Wenham, 216 and "The Sixteen Grandsons of Noah" by Harold Hunt and Russell Grigg available at creation.com.

In looking at one of Gomer's sons, Ashkenaz, we consider Ashkenaz is identified with Germany. German Jews are called the Ashkenazi.⁷

Magog – seems to originally be a people that developed in the area south and east of the Black Sea.

Josephus says that the Magogites were called by the Greeks Scythians. Scythia is the ancient name for what is now parts of Romania and Ukraine.

This would be another example of a people moving from east to west over many years.⁸

Madai – Refers to Media, the Medes who lived to the east of Assyria.

Javan – father of the Greeks, the Hellenic race, the Ionians who lived in western Asia Minor.

Tubal – some place his ancestors to have lived north of the Black Sea. The ESVSB places them south of the Black Sea.

Some suggest that during the time of the NT they lived in what today is the country of Georgia whose capital is Tbilisi, which may have a connection with the name Tubal.⁹

Meshech – he was the ancestor of people who lived SE of the Black Sea. Some suggest this group of people moved to the north and that the name Moscow is connected to the name Meshech.¹⁰

Tiras – Ancestor of the Thracians, some of whom became pirates in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey.¹¹

Other scholars connect Tiras with the Etruscans and the land of Italy.

Look again at verse 5.

5 From these the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

This verse records information that we know did not take place until the judgment at Babel, found in Gen. 11:1-9.

⁷ Morris, 247 and “The Sixteen Grandsons.” Also <https://answersingenesis.org/racism/noah-a-global-flood-and-the-case-against-racism/>

⁸ See HALOT and “The Sixteen Grandsons.”

⁹ “The Sixteen Grandsons.”

¹⁰ “The Sixteen Grandsons.”

¹¹ NET Bible and Wenham, 217.

3) HAM AND SONS, vv. 6-20

Cush – The descendants of Cush settled the area we know today as parts of Sudan and Ethiopia.

The word Cush is found 29x in the OT, often translated as Ethiopia.

Acts 8 records the salvation of an important man from Ethiopia who served Candace, the queen.

Mizraim maybe the most famous of all the names in this listing. The word is found over 680 times in the OT, most often translate as Egypt.

Egyptian airlines founded in 1932 takes the first part of the name Mizraim – Mitsr lit Tayaran.

Put is sometimes translated as Lybia in the OT.

Isn't it fascinating that these nations are often in the news today?

Canaan – The listing of people descended from Canaan is the longest given the judgment that Noah placed on Canaan after Ham's rebellion.

Genesis 10 turns next to a brief account of Nimrod, who may have been the youngest son of Cush.

The name Nimrod may mean to rebel.

Verse 8 says that he began to be a mighty one on the earth or a valiant warrior.

The verb **began** is significant in that it is found earlier in Genesis.

Gen. 4:26 – Men began to call on the name of the LORD.

Gen. 6:1 – Men began to multiply on the face of the earth.

Gen. 9:20 – Noah began to be a farmer.

Nimrod was a mighty warrior and hunter. The word hunter can be used of both men and animals.¹²

Nimrod made a name for himself as a fearsome warrior and then builder or conqueror of cities. Seven cities that he established are listed.

¹² NET Bible note.

Nimrod attempted to build his own empire, but apart from the Biblical text we know essentially nothing about this mighty warrior.

The tyrants of today will also be brought low and one day will be forgotten.

Verses 15-18 then importantly list the descendants of Canaan.

Sidon is the founder of the Phoenician peoples.

Our own alphabet has roots to this ancient people.

Heth is the ancestor of the Hittites. There maybe are two different Hittite empires, one who came from Turkey and another who lived in Palestine.¹³

The listing of 9 different Canaanite people is a foreshadowing of the peoples that the children of Israel would face and fight hundreds of years later.

4) SHEM AND SONS, vv. 21-31

Observe that the first of Shem's descendants is his great-grandson Eber.

Why is Eber highlighted? He is part of the line leading to Abram as we will see in Genesis 11.

The name Hebrew also comes from the name Eber.

Let us briefly consider the five sons of Shem.

Elam is the first listed.

There is a challenge in understanding how he fits into this long listing as a descendant of Shem.

Commentators note that Elamite is not a Semitic language and that Elam is said to be a son of Shem because of culture and geography.¹⁴

How do we understand this?

Donald Wiseman makes an excellent suggestion. He writes that those of the line of Shem settled the area of Elam, what is today the country of Iran.

Later the descendants of Shem were not dominant in this area.

¹³ Morris connects the two. Others distinguish them as separate empires.

¹⁴ Wenham, 228.

Asshur is the name for Assyria. The area of Assyria is connected with Ham and specifically Nimrod.

Here we understand that Assyria like other areas had descendants of both Ham and Shem living together.

Arphaxad – His descendants may have lived northeast of Nineveh. Other maps and sources place them closer to Babylon.

Arphaxad is the father of the Chaldeans.¹⁵

Lud is difficult to place. Some suggest he is the ancestor of the Ludbu, who lived near the Tigris River. Others place Lud in what today is western Turkey.

Lydia was an empire in Western Turkey whose capital was Sardis, one of the seven cities mentioned in Revelation 3.¹⁶

Aram is the father of a number of tribes who lived in area today we know as Syria.

The Syrians called themselves Arameans and they spoke the language of Aramaic. Aramaic was likely the first language of Jesus Christ and was the international language before the spread of Koine Greek.¹⁷

A number of other names are listed in the family of Shem that we don't have time to consider in any detail, but I will highlight from verse 25 the name Peleg.

The line of Peleg up through Abram is found in Genesis 11.

We read of Peleg that in his days the earth was divided.

Likely this refers to the division of the languages following the judgment on the City and Tower of Babel. Some suggest it has reference to the physical division of the earth following the flood. I think the division of languages makes more sense here.

5) CONCLUSION, vv. 32

Gen. 10:32 These *were* the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.

¹⁵ NET Bible and "The Sixteen Grandsons."

¹⁶ ESVSB and "The Sixteen Grandsons."

¹⁷ NET Bible and "The Sixteen Grandsons."

What an amazing amount of information that has been given to us in this one chapter, many lifetimes of study in terms of exploring the details and fuller history of some of the peoples listed here.

The wonder of God's plan both for the world and even our own lives and family.

Thankfulness

Trust for the future

Is nationality important?

Yes, but what is infinitely more important is our unity in Jesus Christ.

Col. 3:11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

Importance of missions and prayer for the continued success of the gospel around the world.

Matt. 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

Prayer

Hymn: 678

Benediction – 1 Cor. 15:57-58

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.